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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR  
GOLDBERGER/SHAMPAIN/ROSENSTOCK/PECCIA; NSC FOR  
ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL; JCS FOR GENERAL FRASER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#)  
SUBJECT: MOD CONFIRMS BARAK APPROVED NEW MASKIYYOT  
CONSTRUCTION

REF: A. TEL AVIV 00063 (2007)  
[B](#). JERUSALEM 01235

Classified By: Charges d'affaires Luis G. Moreno for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#). (C) On July 24, Oded Herman, Senior Advisor to Ministry of Defense (MOD) Pol-Mil Director Amos Gilad, confirmed to econoff press reports indicating that Defense Minister Barak approved the construction of 20 new homes in the Maskiyyot settlement, located in the Jordan Valley. In response to econoff's comments that Barak's approval to build in Maskiyyot contradict former Defense Minister's Peretz's January 2007 decision to halt this same construction (REF A), Herman replied that "Peretz is no longer the Defense Minister."

[2](#). (C) Press reports say that these new housing units will be built for families that Israel evacuated from the Gush Katif settlements in the Gaza Strip in 2005. Currently, Maskiyyot hosts a pre-army academy, but includes civilian structures such as livestock buildings. A recent visit by Consulate Jerusalem poloff (REF B), indicates that eleven families from Gush Katif currently live at Maskiyyot.

[2](#). (SBU) Maskiyyot was established in the 1980s as a NAHAL (mixed military/civilian) settlement. NAHAL (Hebrew acronym for Fighting Pioneer Youth) settlements are communities that combine military service with settling the land. Israel established a number of NAHAL sites in the West Bank after it made its "no new settlements" pledge in 1992. The military has abandoned many of these NAHAL settlements and settlers now occupy many of these sites. In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of NAHAL settlements were turned into official civilian settlements once the population of the community grew large enough to maintain itself without military subsidies.

[3](#). (C) COMMENT: GOI officials, including Prime Minister Olmert, continue to tell the USG, Israeli press, and other international interlocutors that Israel's Roadmap commitments to stop settlement construction do not apply to neighborhoods within Jerusalem, as defined by Israel, or the "settlement blocs" as defined by Israel. However, they had emphasized that there would not be any new settlements. Barak's approval to build new housing units in a remote NAHAL located in the Jordan Valley is a clear indicator that Israel will not necessarily follow their own definition of a settlement freeze. End comment.

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